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SOCIALISM—DISCUSSION

CARL E. PARRY: The drift of my remarks is to be along the line of a plea for scientific modesty. I find that students come into my classes with more confidence in the conception of socialism they happen to have than is at all justified; about the first thing I have to do is to shatter this confidence, by pointing out competing conceptions, and attacking the very idea that any definition of socialism can be adequate. So I insist, from the very first, that no one can have a very adequate conception of socialism who has not formed the personal acquaintance of some real socialists. I find this procedure makes everybody more tolerant, less cocksure, and more appreciative of the human characteristics of socialism, such as optimism, love of justice, human brotherhood, and so forth, which no abstract definition can even suggest.

But of course articulate thought and intelligent discussion cannot proceed without some attempt at definition; all that I wish to emphasize here is that a definition should know, and hold, its place. My own practice is to adhere closely to the rule that the purpose in hand dictates the definition. Thus economics, for its own purposes, will interest itself chiefly in the economic doctrines of socialism; sociology with such matters as its doctrine of class consciousness, and of the functions of the institution of the state; and philosophy, perhaps, with its ethical aspects, or its philosophy of history. For each of these purposes it is legitimate to adopt a different definition of socialism, stressing the aspect under discussion. I cannot see why any one science should have the right to dictate to another, much less to the world at large, just what shall be meant by such a term as socialism.

As a matter of fact, I do not make much use of the term myself; it carries too many meanings to be available for scientific use. I prefer to speak of "the orthodox socialist theory of value", "socialist tactics", "the ideal socialistic state", "the prevailing attitude of the socialists toward business competition", and other terms describing more accurately exactly what I wish to discuss. I believe that as economists, in this and other ways, we should practice the scientific modesty I have mentioned; that we should consciously realize that it is only on such matters as the validity of the labor theory of value, or the alleged law of

unlimited concentration of capital, or the probable relative productivity of a socialistic organization of industry, that we speak with authority. Outside the rather narrow limits set by our science, we should speak, if we speak at all, with extreme conservatism—always reminding the public that they must not attach any special authority to our pronouncements. For instance, the materialistic philosophy of history is a larger subject than any one science will care to handle alone; perhaps it lies in the province of philosophy to speak on it with authority—certainly an economist should not complacently settle the question, offhand, without realizing what a perilous path he is treading. And it seems to me, also, that the desirability of a socialistic organization of society, whatever that may mean, is something upon which an economist, in his professional capacity, has no right to dogmatize. He has done his full duty, for instance, when he makes such a conclusion as this: "In respect to productive efficiency, such an organization does not (or does, as he may conclude) hold out so much promise as the prevailing economic system." And for the purpose of drawing such conclusions as these I believe a special terminology, such as I have suggested, is more serviceable than one centering about an attempt to define "socialism" itself.

B. H. HIBBARD: If, as was held by Locke, argument is to disappear in definition, the need for a definition of socialism can hardly be called in question, since the argument is assuming formidable proportions. Besides, socialism cannot be ignored—with 40 per cent of the German voters casting a Socialist ballot; with the French and Belgian scarcely less numerous and gaining every year; with the English Socialists quiet at present, but threatening and even likely to show immense voting strength on slight provocation; with a 4 per cent showing in our own country, and an occasional case of 10 per cent or more for a state; with several members each biennium in state legislatures, and now a congressman—with all of this evidence of organized persistency and strength it is surely worth while to spend a little time in coming as nearly as possible to an understanding of what it is all about.

In the first place what sort of a definition may be hoped for? Manifestly it should be one of as wide acceptability as possible, since anything short of wide acceptability leaves the great ma-

jority of those interested attacking or advocating the plan without a mutual agreement of what is wanted on either side. Hence the definition must not attempt to go into detail; it cannot show the color of hair and eyes and the texture of the skin like a Dürer portrait; nor yet must it be as uncertain and hazy as the impressionistic productions of some modern artists. We do not want to see an aura, consisting of a curiously blended color spot within the field of vision, as do the followers of a certain new philosophy when looking at a man. Nor, again, can we hope to have this vision so clear and detailed that every feature and line shall be as distinct as the face of a living person at close range; the one is impossible, the other useless. We are of necessity undertaking to picture a scene at long range, and yet if we can get the same angle of vision we shall probably agree fairly well as to leading, outstanding characteristics. Socialism must be defined on the basis of a few fundamentals, and the future must be trusted for a closer view.

In seeking for a definition it will hardly do to go to the extreme opponents of socialism, for they will make it obnoxious; nor may we take the version of ardent supporters, for they will make it too attractive. Opponents seldom take much trouble to understand a case in all phases, while friends lose balance because of enthusiasm. We cannot accept the definition of our strenuous ex-President since he has evidently taken small pains to acquaint himself with the subject; we cannot take the view of the man now in the highest office since it is altogether nebulous. We cannot use the version of the Republican platform of 1908 for it is a begging of the question; nor that of the Democratic platform of the same year, for it is a plea of not guilty to an indictment. We cannot accept the view of Karl Marx since in his zeal to make it consistent and scientific he included too much, yet Bellamy was far more at fault in omitting the premises and giving the conclusions.

It would seem, then, that the definition must be given by those who view the subject dispassionately, and at the same time seriously, if we are to have a definition useful to any considerable number. Out of the many attempts to define socialism, Professor Ely in his book on "Socialism and Social Reform" seems to have been among the most successful, though out of his four elements the first two appear to contain the basis of the proposition, while the last two are corollaries. Socialism means the social, col-

lective, common, ownership and management of the great material instruments of production. Just what is to be understood by the term "great" is no doubt open to discussion, but it must include the material basis by which one set of men get the advantage of their fellows in the fight for existence. Clearly the railroads, the mines, the power sites, belong to this class; it is not clear that garden tools, or the garden itself, or a small farm, must be so included. That, under this definition, the great manufacturing establishments must come into public hands is beyond dispute, but it may well be contended that individual shops, repair outfits, homes, and a multitude of forms of private property may remain private.

Transitions from one social order to another are seldom appreciated by the people concerned at the time of the change. The domestic system of manufacture was in full swing in England in the early eighteenth century; a century later the industrial régime was on, yet the people of the time did not know what was happening. So if socialism comes it will not be by might or by power; it will creep upon us unawares and we shall some day look back and see that the age of capitalism has been supplanted. When the opportunity of exploiting the common citizen through the fortunate possession of natural resources is past, when lines of transportation are in the hands of the people, when the laborers—and we are nearly all laborers—have a real voice in determining the basis of distributing the product, this will be a different industrial order, which may as well be called socialism as by any other name. However, if the good results here alluded to can be accomplished without taking from private hands the main mass of material goods, then individualism and not socialism will best characterize the arrangement, and social reform will designate the nature of the change. But, just as the machine age leaves a vast amount of work to be done by hand, so a socialistic age may leave a vast amount of private property and private enterprise. It is the question of which shall play the grand role.

FRANK A. FETTER: Mr. Martin has quoted in part from my reply to his inquiry. I there distinguished several concepts of socialism and of individualism, for each may be thought of as (1) a general principle of social action, (2) a habitual attitude toward social problems, (3) a group of persons or a political

party made up of persons in whom the habit of thought is relatively marked, (4) a set of measures and policies in regard to social questions. Still other shades of meaning and combinations of ideas appear, but through all this variety runs a connecting thought. I believe the central and essential definition of socialism to be of the character of the first of these four. Socialism as an abstract principle is reliance on the associative qualities of human nature for the motives of action in social affairs.

An ideal solution of a terminological problem is attained when a central thought is reached, around which all the other senses can be grouped and which invests each of the subordinate members with its true significance as parts of a related group. It is this more fundamental and therefore more enduring definition, I take it, that we as social students should now seek, rather than any more accidental and temporarily conspicuous meaning of the term socialism.

Assuming a common understanding as to the principles of scientific terminology, we may put our question thus: how can these principles be most effectively applied to the definition of socialism, a thought of great complexity, a word of manifold usage? We may test the definition of socialism with reference to its etymology, its history, and its competitors for favor.

The etymology of socialism is very simple and apparent. Socialism clearly is related to social in exactly the same way that individualism is related to individual. The two are indispensable counterparts in our vocabulary, just as are idealism and materialism in philosophy, or as idealism and realism in art. Back of, and fundamental in, the terms is the thought of the motives to action upon which we rely, or to which we look, in bringing about a result felt to be good. We may at once eliminate from consideration any definition that implies that socialism is love of fellow man, while individualism is its converse, a self-seeking with intent to injure. That begs the whole question involved and many other questions. A most unselfish person may, in the particular situation, be individualistically inclined, believing that a mistake may be made in social engineering by miscalculating the tensile strength of our social materials, that is, by assuming a capacity for self-sacrifice far in excess of reality. One is individualistic whenever one protests against underestimating the innate, universal motives of self-interest as making up a part, at least, of human nature. One is socialistic, on the other hand,

whenever one warns against the fallacy of assuming that the socially educated and disciplined human nature, as contrasted with innate faculty, is fixed in quality from age to age, or is incapable of development by training, by exercise, and by the cultivation of new standards of morality.

Between the two concepts are divided all the motives of social conduct, those proceeding from the fundamental instinct of self-preservation, and those proceeding from the little less fundamental and ancient self-forgetful instincts of parenthood, sex idealism, duty and loyalty to fellows.

The appeal to the history of the word socialism will hardly support the exclusive claim of any one definition. I take it that the word was first applied in the early nineteenth century to the utopian ideas of such men as Fourier, Cabet, etc., and then to the community experiments their disciples attempted. As late as 1870 appeared Noyes' book with a title in this sense, "A history of American socialisms." Marx and Engels condemned this kind of socialism and were careful to call their own idea communism, and these two words, socialism and communism, somehow between 1850 and about 1880 pretty nearly changed places and meanings. Yet throughout Continental Europe the change is far from complete or exact. Communism as Marx used the term, is known in Germany by his followers and others, less as socialism than as social-democracy. The term socialism has been and is still applied with varying adjectives to very different groups of people and tendencies of thought, such as Christian socialism, Catholic socialism, socialism of the chair, state socialism, etc. The only definition of socialism that unites consistently and logically these various historical meanings is the one here suggested.

Let us compare our definition with its main competitors for favor, of which there evidently are two: (a) socialism as designating a particular political party; (b) socialism as designating a particular political program or goal.

(a) Just now in America a political party is attempting, as appears in one of the definitions quoted by Mr. Martin, to appropriate the terms socialist and socialism. It hardly needs argument to show that the designation of a political party by the name of a general political principle gives necessarily a temporary, superficial, inaccurate meaning, unsuited to scientific purposes. Party names are chosen because of their sentimental ap-

peal, their vote-getting power, their emphasis of a passing political situation. The Democratic party, the Republican party (democracy, republicanism), who thinks of treating these words as used in a fundamental sense? It is a subject of jest that a partisan Democrat may be a plutocrat, an aristocrat, an oligarch, or even a socialist at heart. Lincoln, the greatest of Republicans in the partisan sense, was, in the deeper sense, the best democrat our land has known in public life. It would indeed be a misfortune if the word *socialism*, which so clearly is needed in the family group of terms along with republicanism, democracy, individualism, etc., as general principles, should be perverted to any less fundamental meaning. The attempt to lend a greater definiteness by limiting the word *socialism* to the political party dominated by the intellectual disciples of Marx, would be peculiarly unfortunate just at this time, when the dissent from the Marxian economic value-theory and materialistic philosophy is daily growing in the ranks of social-democracy. That party should be described as radical socialism, or Marxian socialism, or political socialism, according to the varying emphasis.

(b) The other widely favored competing definition is that of socialism as the ideal plan or program of political reform, by which all private property and competitive industry is to be abolished. I long held this definition and attempted to use it consistently, but the difficulties it creates are so many it would require a book to describe them. This definition is surely quite arbitrarily and artificially limited as compared with the etymology of the word socialism. It leaves quite without description and without any uniting term, the various historical forms. It is quite inapplicable to a large proportion of those persons who now call themselves and are by others called socialists—even to a very large proportion of the ten million voters of the Socialist party ticket throughout the world. The attempt to frame the definition in absolute terms is almost self-destructive, as appears clearly in this discussion.

Interwoven with the foregoing argument has been the suggestion of the test of our definition by the two great canons of terminology, expediency and economy. Our scientific definition must be in accord with ordinary usage so far as possible, but it is impossible to make it accord with all usage, for usage is multifarious and inconsistent. We must choose the central fundamental thought, that which takes account of the various specific forms of definition.

We must choose that social concept which in a changing society has in it enough elasticity and vitality to be capable of accommodation to and growth in changing conditions. We must if possible choose a meaning that is logically and conveniently related to other fundamental terms in the language. All these tests are met by this, and by no other definition proposed. It answers all the questions put in the opening paper. Are you in your attitude toward this or that proposal a socialist or an individualist? Are the present changes in public opinion in a socialistic or in an individualistic direction? These and many other uses of the term may and must be made every day. To adopt a narrow and partisan definition is to leave a notable gap in our vocabulary of social discussion. Socialism is a large and significant term. Let us free it from petty prejudices and temporary misconceptions and fit it for a larger social usefulness.

T. N. CARVER: On a certain page in Kidd's "Social Evolution" there is a collection of definitions of religion. There seems to be no uniformity among them until one discovers that the definitions fall into two general classes: first, those which try to define religion as it actually exists as an objective fact in the world; the other includes those which try to define religion as the author thinks it ought to be—that is, an ideal religion, or a pure religion. Any collection of definitions of socialism will fall into the same two classes. The first will include those which describe socialism after finding what socialists are actually advocating in their talks to one another. A definition of this kind will describe socialism as it actually exists as a working force in our political life. Another class of definitions will include those which socialists give us when they are trying to make it seem attractive to economists and other people.

There is a great difference between socialism as it is preached to the working classes, or as it is found in the socialistic journals which appeal to the working classes, and the socialism which is defined before an academic or scientific body such as this. Any one who will take the trouble to read the propagandist literature of socialism will find that nine out of every ten, or possibly ninety-nine out of every hundred, books, articles, or speeches propose nothing short of complete common, or public, or government ownership of all means of production. They do not mince mat-

ters; they propose the whole program, not necessarily to be carried out instantly or all at once, but they leave no doubt that sooner or later, at once or gradually as the case may be, nothing short of complete public ownership of all capital is to be secured.

Again, their economic theories would compel them to go to this end, even though they deny that they are proposing such a scheme as a practical measure. Any one who denies that interest is earned, or contends that all interest is the result of exploitation, could not stop short of that complete program. It would be illogical to take away some capital and leave other capital in the hands of private owners who would continue to receive interest. Of course there might be some very minute forms of capital which it would not pay the government to bother with. Jackknives, lawn mowers, and the like, might be left in the hands of private owners, not because they have any right to them or to the service which such tools render, but merely because they are too small and insignificant for the government to bother with. There would probably be less loss to allow this much exploitation than to go to the expense and trouble of handling such things by government authority.

Therefore, it seems to me that socialism is a pretty definite program, and not a mere tendency, nor a frame of mind, nor an attitude toward things in general. The term socialism is one of those exclusive terms, like vegetarianism. One is not a vegetarian by reason of the fact that he eats vegetables; he is a vegetarian only when he refuses to eat anything else. One is not a socialist by reason of the fact that he believes in some forms of government enterprise, such as schools and the post office; he is a socialist only when he believes in nothing else but government enterprise. I may not even be said to be tending toward vegetarianism when I pass up my plate for more potatoes; I am merely proposing to eat vegetables. Nor is the state tending toward socialism when it proposes some new form of public enterprise, which under the conditions of time and place seems to call for government enterprise. Nor is the physician inconsistent who denounces vegetarianism and at the same time prescribes for some patient a little less meat and a little more vegetable food. In the same way it would be improper to accuse a statesman of inconsistency merely because he one day denounces socialism and the next day approves the government's doing something new.

ISAAC A. HOURWICH: The economist cannot decline to give a scientific definition of socialism. Socialism has had a history going back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. There are said to be ten million socialist voters in the world. Surely it would be a confession of impotence on the part of political economy if it failed to find some definition descriptive of that phenomenon.

Such a definition, however, must not deal in mere abstractions. Socialism must be defined in the terms of evolution.

From the point of view of evolutionary socialism, the qualifying adjective "social" in the phrase "Collective ownership and operation of all social means of production" implies no contradiction. Modern socialism does not aim at the socialization of all bootblack stands. It is only those industries which have become quasi-public that are considered by the evolutionary socialist to be ripe for social control, irrespective of the question of the justice or injustice of rent, interest, etc. Our Interstate Commerce Commission, our public service commissions, our statutes for the regulation of railway rates and charges for other public utilities, are all steps in the direction of socialism. To demand of the individual manufacturer that he should disclose his books to the public would be an impertinence, because it is his private business; but we all agree upon the demand for publicity in corporate affairs.

For an answer to other objections made here to the definition which is given in the platform of the American Socialist party we must refer to the history of socialism. The adjective "democratic" is not used in contradistinction to individual enterprise, but to distinguish modern socialism from such forms of industrial organization as, for example, the communism of the Jesuit state of Uruguay, where there was public ownership and operation of all industries, yet without democratic management. The term "collective", as distinguished from "public ownership", likewise has its history. It originated in the controversy between the followers of Marx and Bakounine in the first International. Marx and his school advocated "public" ownership, whereas the disciples of Proudhon and Bakounine advocated voluntary coöperation, which they termed "collective" ownership. During the last twenty years coöperation has made great strides in agriculture, both in Europe and in the United States. The various coöperative associations in agriculture number their membership by the million. Here is an example of collective ownership and operation, which is yet not "public" ownership and operation.

DAVIS R. DEWEY: I am skeptical as to the value of attempting to define socialism. Even if the members of the Association or a similar body should agree upon such a definition, it would not be possible to secure an agreement in the world at large. In public discussion it would still be necessary to inquire specifically as to the brand of socialism under consideration in order to meet on a clearly defined issue.

F. W. TAUSSIG: In these discussions of what "socialism" implies, it seems to me odd that so much attention is given to the means, so little to the end. Collective ownership and management are but means. The end of socialism, and the essential thing for it, is a change in distribution. A change in the mechanism of production is desired not for itself but in order to substitute a distribution deemed just for one deemed unjust. I take it that under any socialistic organization all funded incomes (interest, rent, and so on) would disappear; no leisure class would exist; all the able-bodied would labor, and the only remuneration would be for labor, that is, would be wages. Wages would be adjusted on some basis thought equitable; perhaps on a basis of need, or one of sacrifice, or one of efficiency, or some combination of these; but at all events one deliberately selected as just, and surely with very much less of inequality than in existing society.

Now in deciding how far a remnant of individual ownership or competitive service might be permitted, as not inconsistent with the principles of socialism, the essential question would be whether the result was in accord with this deliberately selected canon of just distribution. Public ownership of capital *per se* does not necessarily modify the essentials of existing distribution; and conversely some private ownership of capital is not necessarily inconsistent with socialistic distribution. The question is, which principle of distribution dominates. When a government nowadays undertakes public management, say of a railway, it does not change the essentials of distribution. Interest is still paid to the former stockholders, who become simply public fund holders. Great disparities in wages remain; the officials and mechanical experts still get high salaries, the workmen still get wages at the familiar rates. This is not socialism, or any noticeable approach toward socialism. But if all large-scale enterprises are under public management; if interest on capital disappears; if wages are ad-

justed on what is selected as the just basis; and if only such private ownership and management are allowed as bring substantially the same rates of earnings as these wages—then there would be not only an approach to socialism, but socialism in all its essentials. Physicians might be allowed to own their instruments, mechanics their tools, even small farmers (“one-family farmers”, say) their own land, if no marked divergences from the “just” scheme of distribution resulted. True, a refined analysis might detect in such cases a small infusion of return on capital; but the maxim *de minimis* would apply. Hence there might be some play to private ownership and some competitive activity, and yet socialism full-blown. If one looks simply to the means—public ownership—one can say there is no socialism unless there is universal public ownership. But if one looks to the end, one can say there is socialism as soon as the existing “unjust” modes of distribution are swept away, and only those competitive earnings left undisturbed which conform to the socialist principle of justice.

RICHARD T. ELY: It seems to me we are talking about two different things, although to both we are giving the one term, socialism. Most of the speakers have been talking to us about an economic program; but Professor Fetter has been talking to us about a social philosophy. Inasmuch as the definition found in my “Socialism and Social Reform” has been referred to, I think that I ought to say a few words further about my position. In my book I speak about socialism in the broader sense and in the narrower sense. By socialism in the broader sense I mean a general social philosophy; and, so far as I can gather, I define socialism in its broadest sense substantially as Professor Fetter has defined it. As a matter of fact I find socialism used in this broad sense, and something can be said in favor of employing the word to designate a certain social philosophy which is opposed to individualism. It is apt, however, to lead to confusion. My definition of socialism which has been quoted by Mr. Martin and referred to by Professor Hibbard gives, it seems to me, the essential elements in that economic program which is ordinarily called socialism. Socialism may include other elements, but any economic program to be socialism must include these. I have based my analysis on the study of the various programs of socialism in different countries where socialism is found.

JOHN MARTIN: It is, of course, competent for anybody to refuse to use any word, socialism or other. The difficulty which Professor Dewey will encounter is that he cannot blot out the word from the textbooks nor burn the libraries of volumes in which it is discussed.

I cannot follow Professor Carver in his contention that because socialists deny that interest is legitimate, because they contend that interest is not earned, they must logically demand the public ownership of absolutely all industry. The instruments of the doctor, the brushes of the painter, are tools of production, yet their owners do not collect interest on them, and their ownership by the community is not inevitably required to prevent the private appropriation of interest.

Professor Carver argues that just as vegetarianism forbids the eating of any meat so socialism forbids the use of any private ownership. Many of us had thought that, on the contrary, individualism was the exclusive political philosophy and forbade the use of any public ownership. Herbert Spencer and the Manchester School of economists declared all government interference with industry bad *per se*. Not until recently was I aware that individualism, in the opinion of some of its professors, is compatible with an unlimited extension of public ownership. Surely every such extension can legitimately be described as a step toward socialism. Suppose a man had eaten an exclusively meat diet. There are such carnivorous men, though I don't know of any women. Suppose a doctor recommended him to make a meal of vegetables first once a week, then once a day, and so gradually to supersede flesh with vegetables. Would he not be moving all the time towards vegetarianism, even though he never finally dropped every ounce of meat from his menu? Would the doctor be consistent, while prescribing this change of food, if he went about denouncing vegetarianism as the sum of medical villainies and a peril to the health of the citizens? If nothing is socialistic short of the complete public ownership of industry, then all the socialistic programs are only expressions of the new individualism, for no socialist program demands the immediate transfer to the community of all industry.